

AMENDMENTS

In the Claims

Please add the following new claims:

**(CLEAN COPY)**

---

~~17.~~ (New) A method of transporting information in a telecommunications network having a plurality of network elements, the method comprising:

transporting network management information using a virtual tunnel, wherein said virtual tunnel comprises,  
a first network element configured to relocate said network management information from a first set of byte locations of a first frame to a second set of byte locations of a second frame.

*Am*  
*Conf*  
18. (New) The method of claim 17, wherein said transporting comprises:

transporting said network management information using said virtual tunnel, wherein said virtual tunnel further comprises,  
a second network element configured to receive said second frame.

19. (New) The method of claim 18, wherein said transporting comprises:

transporting said network management information using said virtual tunnel, wherein said second network element comprises,  
a second network element configured to relocate said network management information from said second set of byte locations of said second frame to said first set of byte locations of a third frame.

20. (New) The method of claim 19, further comprising:  
configuring said virtual tunnel between a source network element and a destination  
network element, wherein  
said transporting comprises,  
transporting said network management information between said source  
network element and said destination network element using said  
virtual tunnel in response to said configuring.

21. (New) The method of claim 20, wherein said transporting comprises:  
transporting said network management information from said source network element to  
said destination network element using said virtual tunnel in response to said  
configuring, wherein said first network element comprises,  
a first network element configured to receive said first frame from said source  
network element.

22. (New) The method of claim 20, wherein said transporting comprises:  
transporting said network management information from said source network element to  
said destination network element using said virtual tunnel in response to said  
configuring, wherein said second network element comprises,  
a second network element configured to transport said third frame to said  
destination network element.

23. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein said transporting comprises:  
transporting said network management information using said virtual tunnel, wherein  
said first frame and said second frame comprise one or more synchronous optical  
network (SONET) frames.

24. (New) The method of claim 23, wherein said transporting comprises:  
transporting said network management information using said virtual tunnel, wherein  
said first set of byte locations comprise a section overhead portion of said one or  
more SONET frames.

25. (New) The method of claim 23, wherein said transporting comprises:  
transporting said network management information using said virtual tunnel, wherein  
said second set of byte locations comprise a line overhead portion of said one or  
more SONET frames.

*A*  
*Cont*

26. (New) An apparatus comprising:  
means for transporting network management information using a virtual tunnel, wherein  
said virtual tunnel comprises,  
a first network element configured to relocate said network management  
information from a first set of byte locations of a first frame to a second  
set of byte locations of a second frame.

27. (New) The apparatus of claim 26, wherein said virtual tunnel further comprises a second  
network element configured to receive said second frame.

28. (New) The apparatus of claim 27, wherein said second network element comprises a  
second network element configured to relocate said network management information from said  
second set of byte locations of said second frame to said first set of byte locations of a third  
frame.

29. (New) The apparatus of claim 28, further comprising:  
means for configuring said virtual tunnel between a source network element and a  
destination network element.

*1*  
*Concl.*

30. (New) An apparatus for transporting network management information in a telecommunications network having a plurality of network elements, comprising:

    a first network element comprising:

        a first line interface to receive a first frame including said network management information; and

        a cross-connect to relocate said network management information from a first set of byte locations of said first frame to a second set of byte locations of a second frame.

31. (New) The apparatus of claim 30 further comprising:

    a second network element comprising:

        a first line interface to receive said second frame; and

        a cross-connect to relocate said network management information from said second set of byte locations of said second frame to said first set of byte locations.

---